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UNCLAS HARARE 000274

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION POWELL EVIDENCE AGAINST IRAQ;
HARARE

¶1. Under headline "Powell fails to prove case against Baghdad" the pro-government daily "Daily Mirror" dedicated its February 7 editorial to dismissing Secretary of State Colin Powell's testimony against Iraq, saying, Powell's presentation was "flawed" and "did not have any shred of evidence." Excerpts:

¶2. "United States Secretary of State Colin Powell's theatrical presentation of what he said was evidence that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction was unconvincing to say the least. It was full of assumptions and presumptions, and therefore the United Nations should not sanction war against a sovereign nation, Iraq, on the basis of Powell's flawed presentation. To say the truth, Powell did not have any shred of evidence, he was just whipping emotions. Armed with data from the Iraqi defectors, spy satellites and telephone intercepts, his presentation lagged far behind the expectations of the world, real evidence that would justify a war. . . . Logically, if the U.S. has no hidden agenda, it should agree to increase the capabilities of monitoring and collecting information on Iraqi territory. Political decisions should be based on facts and evidence, and definitely not on egocentric beliefs. Who says the 'so-called evidence' cannot be concocted, especially in this age of high technology? As for the photographs of what Powell called weapons sites and mobile weapons factories, why is it that the information had not been presented to the U.N. arms inspectors for verification?

"We believe it is folly for Powell, who is not in Iraq, to accuse the Iraqis of hiding biological and chemical weapons when the U.N. inspectors, who are practically scrounging for proof in that country, have not found any shred of evidence since. It should be noted that weapons of mass destruction are not like an aspirin tablet that you can hide in your pocket. They are weapons that cannot be concealed easily. Without wanting to pacify Iraq, its response has been more convincing. Since the Gulf War numerous inspections have been conducted but no weapons of mass destruction have been found. So, could the assertion by Iraq that Powell's presentation was 'unrelated to the truth' be truth. Powell's presentation, created two camps, with Britain, as expected, supporting the U.S. while China, Russia and France are insisting that there was need to find convincing evidence. . . . It should be asked: to what extent do the nature and scope of the threat justify the recourse to war and how does the U.N. make sure that the considerable risks of such intervention are actually kept under control?"

SULLIVAN